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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003819

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RESPONSES TO ZARQAWI'S CALL FOR JIHAD AGAINST THE IRAQI SHIA

Classified By: CDA David Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

. (SBU) SUMMARY. In the wake of the September 14 terror attacks and the Zarqawi statement calling for jihad against Iraq's Shia, Embassy has reached out to Iraqi contacts across the religious and political spectrum to ensure broad condemnation of violence. Charge urged Acting Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways and Deputy President Shaykh Ghazi al-Yawr to generate the widest possible denunciations of the Zarqawi statement, and each said they would do so. PolCouns called Sunni and Shia leaders, urging the former to condemn Zarqawi's statement and the latter to exercise restraint. Radio reports conveyed a statement from Grand Ayatollah Sistani calling for calm no matter what the provocation. Embassy contacts advise that Sunni political parties and leaders plan statements condemning Zarqawi. Contacts from the Sadr movement told us that Muqtada also will urge Shia restraint. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On the heels of the September 14 deaths of over 180 Iraqis in 12 separate bombing attacks, an audiotape attributed to Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi appeared on the internet calling for "all-out war" against Shia (the term used in the audiotape was "raidha", a pejorative term for Shia) to avenge the fighters killed in the ongoing Tal Afar campaign. In the audiotape, Zarqawi demanded that other religious groups and tribes disavow the government of Shia Prime Minister Jafari or face attack. In response, September 15 radio news quoted Grand Ayatollah Sistani saying that even if half of the Shia in Iraq are killed, the Shia would not be drawn into a civil war.

Charge Meets with Top Officials

13. (C) Acting Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways told Charge that at the September 15 cabinet meeting he had chaired, government officials had agreed the campaign of violence must be condemned from all sides. He said the Cabinet agreed to ask political groups to measure their sectarian complaints carefully. Shaways commented that some Sunni Arab leaders - like Deputy President Ghazi al-Yawar and Sunni Waqf leader Shaykh Ahmed Abdulghafur Samarai'e would be helpful. Others, like Dialog Council spokesman Saleh Mutlak and Ulema Council head Harith ad-Dhari, would not. Charge urged Shaways also to talk to SCIRI leader Abdel Aziz al-Hakim to urge restraint among Shia and for them to avoid retaliation.

14. (C) Charge also spoke to Shia Coalition leader and Deputy Parliament Speaker Shahrastani to express appreciation for the Ayatollah's statement urging restraint. Shahrastani pointedly urged Charge to pass to the Sunni clerics that the Shia community needed to see some clear sign of Sunni Arab rejection of Zarqawi, such as anti-Zarqawi demonstrations after the Friday prayers on September 1. Charge said we would pass the message but noted in the atmosphere of violence this might be hard for them to arrange. Charge also urged Shahrastani weigh in with Shia Islamist leadership to ensure Badr militia elements act with restraint. Shahrastani agreed this would be important and promised to do so.

15. (C) In his conversation September 15 with Charge and General Casey, Deputy President Ghazi al-Yawar vigorously condemned the Zarqawi statements and the attacks of September 14. Ghazi underlined twice that he didn't want Zarqawi as a "step-father" for the Iraqi Sunni Arab cause. He said he had condemned the attacks publicly on September 14 and would do so again. He cautioned, however, that Sunni Arab grievances are building, and Zarqawi's message is growing in appeal to some in the Sunni Arab community.

Sunni Community - Mixed Messages

16. (C) PolCouns called Sunni Waqf director Shaykh Ahmed Abdel Ghaffur Samaraie to thank him for his public remarks seen on al-Arabiya on the evening of September 14 and to urge that he continue to strongly denounce the Zargawi statement. Samaraie said he had appeared on seven satellite networks urging Sunni solidarity with the Shia and denouncing the Zargawi statement. He appreciated our message that we would also urge restraint on Shia militias.

17. (C) Sunni political leader Saad Al-Janabi told Poloff that Sunni political leaders and members of the Group of 15 will today issue a strong response condemning Zargawi's statement. He also stated that he had offered office space in his fortified compound to the IIP, the Dialogue Council and other Sunni group who took part in negotiations on the Constitution since they had been specifically targeted by Zargawi.

Sunni Arabs Also Have Grievances

18. (C) PolCouns called senior Iraqi Islamic Party official Naseer al-Ani to thank him for the party's public denunciation of the September 14 attacks but urging that the IIP issue a statement denouncing the Zargawi call for jihad against the Shia. Al-Ani said the IIP's position on the need for Iraqi solidarity was well known and had been seen on satellite television stations that day. PolCouns countered that Party General Secretary Tareq al-Hashimi's September 14 evening appearance on al-Jazeera was not all helpful. He condemned "all violence," without specifically condemning Sunni on Shia attacks, and his remarks about Iraqi Government and American support for "ethnic cleansing" of Sunni Arabs was very unhelpful. PolCouns emphasized the IIP needed to speak clearly in denouncing Zargawi. Al-Ani said that Adnan Dulaymi and the Sunni Arab leadership are meeting to decide on a public statement. He was sure it would include a denunciation of the Zargawi remarks.

19. (C) Former Sunni Waqf leader Adnan al-Dulaimi held a press conference September 15 in which he condemned the September 14 violence. "We're against anyone who threatens Shia or Sunni" but he did not mention Zargawi. When asked by PolOff why he did not mention Zargawi, Dulaimi said, "We are as afraid as the Shia of Zargawi."

110. (C) Iraqi Council of National Dialogue (ICND) member and Constitution Committee expert Dr. Saadoon al-Zubaidi told PolOff Sep 15 that while many in the ICND have or will condemn the bombings, tribal and provincial members are hesitant to do so. "They think Zargawi is too powerful in the provinces, and they are afraid to publicly disagree with him." PolOff urged the ICND to ensure the broadest possible Sunni condemnation of the bombings saying that silence implies agreement.

Shia Response - Good Words

111. (C) PolCouns called Haithem al-Hasani, the personal aide to SCIRI leader Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, as Badr Organization director Hadi al-Ameri was not available. PolCouns noted that Sunni Arab leaders have denounced the attacks in some instances and have pledged to do so in others. He pressed for Badr Corps restraint. Hasani at first denied to PolCouns that the Badr Corps is not involved in any killings. PolCouns insisted this was not the time to argue and insisted Hasani pass the message. He said he would do so.

112. (U) Sources in the Sadr movement told Poloffs that Muqtada Al-Sadr will issue a statement condemning the call for jihad and encouraging calm within the Shia community later today or tomorrow.
Satterfield